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THE PURPOSE OF COLLEGE GREEK¹

It is possible that an assemblage of classical scholars may feel some interest in the views of a mere layman in this field, an unprejudiced observer of Greek from outside the inner professional fold, a teacher of English and an administrative officer who has never used Greek vocationally, who has never found it of any direct practical and professional use, in the narrower sense, who has forgotten how to read the language, and who, in the face of these obvious objections, is profoundly grateful that the College requirements of her undergraduate years forced her to study Greek, and enthusiastically believes in its value to-day.

Of course, Greek is of no practical, vocational use, save for the very few who are privileged to teach it. Its appeal in College must be to those who expect from it far other things—joy in beauty, exhilaration of adventure, and illumination of the mind. The purpose of College Greek should be to communicate these things in much the same manner in which they are conveyed to the spirit by actual travel, by journeys across the sea to civilizations older and in some ways richer and in many ways different from our own.

In offering myself as an humble example—a kind of Exhibit A—of this sort of pleasurable result of classical study, I must apologize for the rather personal, autobiographical flavor of some of my remarks. In order to give my opinion any value as a scientific specimen, I must state briefly the history of my own Greek studies. Having reluctantly decided to enter college, and finding that Barnard prescribed Greek for entrance, I began the language in the October preceding my admission. One other pupil and myself, in a cosy class of two, with an excellent teacher, met for seven periods a week and easily covered, by June, all the entrance requirement and more, except the three books of the *Iliad*, which I studied with a tutor for three weeks after school had closed. I have always been extremely glad that I covered beginning Greek so rapidly, swallowing the grammar in large, hasty doses, and arriving within a couple of months at pleasurable reading. Had I been obliged to drag through these early stages at one-third the pace, I am confident that I should not have loved the language so well.

In those days Greek was prescribed for freshmen, and, though I never thought of specializing in the Classics, I chose to continue it, one course a year, through all the rest of my College days, just because I liked it. We read rapidly, I am happy to say, as we did not in our Latin courses, and I therefore covered a fair amount of literature—about ten books of the *Odyssey*, as I remember, Plato's *Protagoras* and *Apology*, some *Lysias*, which I recall but vaguely, the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, which we did not appreciate, at least two plays of Euripides and three of Sophocles, which impressed

me deeply, several orations of Demosthenes, and his life by Plutarch, the fragments of lyric and bucolic poets—I remember vividly the beautiful bits of Sappho—and finally a semester of Pindar—very difficult. There was probably more, which I forget. I have always regretted that I read no Herodotus and no Aeschylus.

Perhaps my happiest recollection of those days of College Greek is of the weekly hour in my freshman year when as many of the class as wished met for voluntary reading at sight. We must have been conscientious and studious souls in those days, for, as I remember, most of the class came. We covered rapidly the Phaeacian episode and several other books of the *Odyssey*. The beauty of Homer penetrated the spirit of one freshman at least, as no other poetry had yet done. I still repeat to myself occasionally ten lines from the fifth book which I happened to admire greatly and to commit to memory that winter twenty years ago. It is the passage beginning *πάντα θεά, μή μοι τόδε χέοι*, in which Odysseus tells Calypso of his unconquerable yearning for the day of his homecoming.

Well, those pleasant hours of my College Greek passed long ago. What did I gain from them to compensate for the expenditure of time throughout four years—of time in which I might have learned stenography and bookkeeping and cooking and many other useful things of which I am still ignorant? What can others gain from such hours to-day? On the basis of my own experience I will try to analyze what is, to my mind, the value and the purpose of Greek in our College curriculum.

Greek is, of course, an exquisitely adjusted linguistic instrument. I learned from my own superficial study of its grammar, syntax and vocabulary a good deal which has proved applicable to other languages and to the art of expression in general. But on the whole I do not believe that this disciplinary, linguistic side of the study should be emphasized, as I believe it should be in Latin. Knowledge of the language as a mere tool, a key to unlock the treasure house of its literature, should be the conception held before the students; they should be hurried as rapidly as possible over all philological preliminaries, and even accuracy of understanding should to some extent be sacrificed to rapidity of reading, so that the students may enjoy as widely as may be the abundant riches of the storehouse, before graduation and the pressure of worldly affairs shut them from further exploration in this delightful field.

Some bit of linguistic training we may, however, claim as the result of any Greek course. We may claim also some solid addition to our stock of historical and mythological information, and the ability to thrill responsively to allusions in other literatures to these great tales of the past. I vividly remember the aesthetic joy I derived even from the very crude production some years ago of Stephen Phillips's *Ulysses*—especially in the scene in Hades when a mysterious shade approaches the much-enduring hero, who greets it in awe-struck

¹An address by the Dean of Barnard College, delivered before The New York Latin Club, February 19, 1916. Though Miss Gildersleeve confines herself to College Greek, much, if not most of what she says applies to all study of Greek, and, it may be added, to all study of Latin. C. K.

tones, "Oh, mighty Agamemnon!" What a wealth of poetry, of tragedy, of the imagination of centuries, glowed about the sound of that great name! How all that rich association suddenly lifted the scene for me to thrilling heights! The comparative blankness of mind which results from lack of such connotations was impressed upon me a few years ago—before the play became so fashionable—when I was reading to a group of students passages from Gilbert Murray's translation of *The Trojan Women*, and one interested girl inquired earnestly, "Who *was* Hecuba?" How comparatively little the poetry could mean to her!

Another function of College Greek is, I believe, to arouse in the students's minds the sense of the romance of archaeology, of the journeys which it has made possible into the long dead but still vital past. It is strange how many people look upon archaeology as a dull and musty pursuit. They have never thrilled to the story of Schliemann's life, or of the recent work in Crete which has made old myths seem concrete historical realities and unearthed a forgotten civilization. There is no child who is unconscious of the joyous excitement of digging for buried treasure, who has not read with bated breath tales of pirate gold. We should not neglect to make real to students the far greater joy and excitement of unearthing buried civilizations—a pleasure easily obtainable vicariously, if not in person, and a taste to be acquired more easily through classical archaeology than in other fields.

Akin to this is the desire for intellectual adventure which should be stirred in the souls of our College students—the eagerness to explore new and strange fields, to venture on experiments in subjects far from their daily lives, in a different age, a different atmosphere, from which they may derive mental stimulus and often creative power. Many persons lack this spirit of intellectual initiative and adventure. I was glad to see it shown recently by a group of Barnard students who acquired from some elementary study of medieval literature an interest in old Irish romances, and a desire to study Old Irish. Our Professor of Celtic Literature in Columbia University kindly arranged an elementary course in this subject, and twelve energetic undergraduates are faring forth into this comparatively uncharted academic sea of intellectual adventure. Even more keenly should this spirit be stirred within students with respect to Greek. Some linguistic barriers should not deter, but rather lure on hardy souls to these joys of exploration and to the stimulus of remote and alien lands.

Just because Hellenic civilization is remote from us in point of time, intimate contact with it seems to me invaluable in giving us a sense of historical perspective, a realization that things develop slowly, with long lapses and backslidings, that we must not be too impatient of delays, nor too much carried away by the latest social nostrums and cure-alls. They were probably discussed some twenty centuries ago also, and their mere enunciation to-day is not going to revolutionize

forthwith the face of society. To both the feminists and the antifeminists who view with opposite emotions some ideas regarding the position of women and the home I commend the reading of the fifth book of the Republic, to which I myself occasionally turn—in Jowett's translation—and which I find both illuminating and soothing.

This long vista across the ages, and this sense of contact with what was in so many ways the fountain head of our civilization, give an intellectual experience which we should not wish to miss. It is sometimes, of course, discouraging, to realize how little we have progressed, if we have progressed at all, beyond that golden age of long ago. Deep was the depression in the hearts of some of us on a gray afternoon last May, when we sat in the new stadium and witnessed that probably un-Greek but moving presentation of *The Trojan Women*. 'Would ye be wise, ye cities, flee from war' fell from the lips of Cassandra with almost uncanny aptness.

How are ye blind,
Ye treaders down of cities, ye that cast
Temples to desolation, and lay waste
Tombs, the untrodden sanctuaries where lie
The ancient dead; yourselves so soon to die!

It might have been written to-day, of the madness which is now abroad in the world. As we listened we felt that no one could realize more acutely than Euripides the hideous cruelty and the blank futility of war. The truth was evidently apparent in his time to a thoughtful man, and yet in all these centuries we seem to have made no progress towards obliterating this futile cruelty from the earth.

It is certainly discouraging at times, but I believe that it is in the main illuminating and right, that we should thus realize how like in mind and heart are we and the men of other ages. The essential kinship of the human race it is proper that we should learn, in order that we may understand and sympathetically interpret the course of history. The eternally clear and true intellectual power manifested in Plato, the touching appreciation of the elemental bond uniting man and wife and child shown in Homer's beautiful scene of the parting of Hector and Andromache—such examples as these show what a vivid sense of human kinship with other times the study of Greek should bring to us.

Such voyaging into ancient thought causes this realization of the essential likeness of humanity, and also a respectful toleration of unessential differences, and is thus in its effect much like foreign travel and residence in distant lands. Without it we are in danger of becoming provincial and narrow. You may remember that in Bernard Shaw's delightful play, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, when Caesar's British secretary expresses horror at some Egyptian practises, Caesar apologizes for him to Cleopatra, saying, "You see, he imagines that the customs of his own little island are the laws of nature". We, too, the island dwellers of Manhattan, are not immune to such imaginings.

Not even in times of peace, still less to-day, is it possible for most of us to break down this sort of provincialism by actual physical travel in foreign lands. But by study pursued in the proper mood of pleasurable exploration, and especially, I believe, by the study of Greek, our minds can travel afar, and we can gain much the same broadening effect upon our spirit.

And finally Greek is valuable in bringing us into contact with beauty. Perhaps this is its most precious function. Many people to-day forget a truth which I have had vividly impressed on my mind during the past few years—our need of food for the spirit, of sustenance which will rouse to a warmer glow within us the driving force of energy, ambition, idealism. There are, of course, various kinds of food for the spirit—friendship, religion, the influence of striking personalities, the desire for social service. One kind of very great value is the stimulation derived from the highest types of the fine arts, the aesthetic joy of contact with beauty. I can remember having a fine production of a great opera fill me with renewed energy, with consciousness of the value of life, with zest and increased ability for teaching required argumentation to sophomores the next morning. We differ somewhat in the types of art from which we derive this food for the spirit, but for very many of us, I believe, the riches that lie in Greek culture, the beauties of Greek literature,—unequalled except perhaps by English—of Greek architecture, of Greek sculpture, can give pleasure, inspiration and driving force beyond most other aesthetic joys.

These values which I have been enumerating—I realize how inadequately—can be achieved by the proper sort of study of Greek archaeology, history, philosophy, art, and literature. We should not confine our enthusiasm to literature alone. In travelling in a foreign land we can derive vastly greater pleasure, interest and profit if we can speak the language of the country. The study of Greek literature, of course, should be conducted if possible in Greek. Even a scanty knowledge of that tongue enables one to taste a flavor absent from any translation, however excellent. But I can not help feeling that it is better to know Greek culture through translations than not at all, and I should imagine that it would be well for teachers of Greek to do all in their power to arouse interest in Greek art, history, philosophy and even translated literature, with the hope that this contact with Hellenism may stir the students to desire the more intimate acquaintance to be gained only through a knowledge of the language.

A rather amusing example of this sort of approach is furnished at Barnard by our Greek Games, a pleasant spring festival. The reciting of a Greek invocation to the presiding deity, the study of Greek costumes involved in the preparations, or even the hurling of the discus, sometimes fires our young freshmen and sophomores with the ambition to journey further towards ancient Hellas.

In meditating on the subject of this address I was led to wonder to what extent the women's Colleges during

the last ten years had been winning students to the study of Greek and had thus been enabled to achieve some of the good ends which I have been suggesting. The statistics which were courteously furnished to me by seven of the principal Colleges for women did not cover completely more than five years—from 1910-1911 to 1914-1915 inclusive—and they were based on such different systems of registration and compilation that it is impossible to draw from them any positive and definite conclusions. You may be interested in knowing, however, the sum totals of registrations in Greek for all the seven Colleges lumped together, for each of the five years. They run as follows:

1910-11.....	568
1911-12.....	553
1912-13.....	518
1913-14.....	506
1914-15.....	560

You will observe that they decline steadily for four years and then suddenly leap back to a figure almost equal to the first of the series. What caused this sudden revival in 1914-1915? Were the students seeking refuge from a world of war?

Another point which struck me in studying the statistics in detail was that a great proportion of the registrations, in certain cases, were in beginning Greek. At one of the largest Colleges, for example, out of 117 total registrations in Greek for 1914-15, 76 were in the beginning Greek course. Evidently the hope of College Greek lies largely in these elementary classes. Our classical departments—in the women's Colleges, at least—can not depend upon any considerable supply of students who have begun Greek in the Secondary Schools. They must somehow capture the imagination and the interest of students after they enter College, and initiate them then into the joys of Greek.

The difficulty of doing this to-day lies not in any diminution of the value of Greek, but in the rapid multiplication of other subjects also of interest and of use. This pressure on the curriculum is vividly realized by any one who advises students regarding their choice of studies. Greek can best hold a firm position in the College by emphasizing, I believe, these cultural and pleasurable aspects which I have tried to outline. What student would decline an opportunity to travel abroad with an inspiring guide and live for a time in a land alive with interest and beauty? Presented to her in the guise of a similar chance, a journey into Hellenic civilization should never cease to appeal.

You will have noticed that I use most often the analogy between the study of Greek and foreign travel. For many years it has always sprung to my mind when I have tried to explain to questioning doubters my benefit from my own College Greek. As I look back upon this, it seems to me most like a journey into a different land; it seems that I lived for a time in a clearer air, under a brighter sky, where minds played freely, where life was young, where the world was rich with a balanced and exquisite beauty. Perhaps the real Greece was not

at all like this vision of mine. I do not greatly care. Not for much gold would I give up this memory of a happy journey. Whether I can read Greek now or not—what matters that? Because I can not travel there again, shall I therefore regret that I was once privileged to dwell in Arcady? I rather rejoice that for a time at least my steps were turned thither, and I try to guide others also towards the pleasures of that delectable land.

BARNARD COLLEGE,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

VIRGINIA C. GILDERSLEEVE.

REVIEWS

A Companion to Classical Texts. By F. W. Hall.
Oxford: at the Clarendon Press (1913). Pp. 363.
\$3.15.

Mr. Hall's book consists of nine chapters, on The Ancient Book, The Text of Greek Authors in Ancient Times, The Text of Latin Authors in Ancient Times, The History of Latin Texts from the Age of Charlemagne to the Italian Renaissance, The History of Texts During the Period of the Italian Renaissance, Recension, Emendation, MS Authorities for the Text of the Chief Classical Writers, The Nomenclature of MSS, with the Names of Former Possessors. The book is intended especially for

those who, without wishing to become specialists in textual criticism, yet find that textual problems inevitably enter into their studies. Many people tend to regard textual criticism as a disease. But it is neither a disease nor a science, but simply the application of common sense to a class of problems which beset all inquirers whose evidence rests upon the authority of manuscript documents.

And the author has applied common sense to the problems covered by the book. If there is little in it that is new, there is much that is stated in a new and simple manner. Each chapter is followed by a short bibliography. The result is a readable, scholarly and altogether commendable book, well adapted to the purposes intended. The great difficulty with a book of this sort is to know where to stop—every one will feel that certain topics should not have been excluded and that others again should have been treated more fully. Some of the reviewer's notions on these matters will come out in a discussion of the separate chapters.

Chapter I gives a good account of the papyrus roll, its manufacture and its effect on literature (as in determining the length of books), the change from roll to codex, and the book trade. It seems unsafe to argue from Martial 14.190, *Pellibus exiguis artatur Livius ingens*, however, that the parchment MS here mentioned contained only excerpts.

Chapter II is based chiefly on Wilamowitz, as Mr. Hall informs the reader. First comes a discussion of the pre-Alexandrian period, in which there were few agencies tending to preserve the original texts. Alexandrian scholarship has given us our modern texts. It has protected poetry more than prose. In an unprotected text conjectural emendation must be resorted

to far more often than in a protected text. The newly found papyri show that one must not put all his trust in one class of MSS.

The next three chapters deal with the history of Latin texts (the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are rightly deemed of sufficient importance to be given separate chapters). In contrast with the Greek texts, most Latin texts were protected by scholarship from the first. Beginning with the second century B.C. scholars busied themselves with the texts of Latin authors (one might almost say that the scholar as well as the school-teacher seized upon the Aeneid with avidity as soon as it was published). The methods of Roman scholarship were derived from Greece—notably from Pergamum and Alexandria. To the very end of antiquity scholars gave their attention to the texts of classical authors. In the fourth and fifth centuries a number of amateur critics kept up the tradition. The names of several of these are preserved in the subscriptions of MSS, e. g. Mavortius in the MSS of Horace. The unfavorable attitude of some Christians toward everything pagan was counterbalanced by the desire to perpetuate the monuments of Rome's past greatness. In this movement Cassiodorus and Isidore were particularly prominent. During the Middle Ages the importance of Italy in continuing the classical tradition is small compared with that of France, Germany and England. The Irish and the English brought to the Continent an interest in classical learning. The Englishman Alcuin became head of Charlemagne's Court School, and was largely responsible for the humanistic revival of the ninth century.

Mr. Hall inserts at this point a description of the methods of medieval scribes and scholars. To say that "the size and arrangement of the quires often provide important evidence for the age and history of a codex" is scarcely illuminating to the uninitiated. The activity of the ninth century is well summed up in the words

The immense services rendered by the Carolingians to the Latin classics consist, therefore, not in their attempts at recension, which could never be systematic, but in the accuracy with which they copied the good manuscripts which were still accessible, and in the legibility of the script in which they copied them.

The chapter on the Renaissance seems much too short to one who takes a special interest in that period of intense enthusiasm. The pendulum swung back and once again Italy was the center of classical learning. By the way, it is worth emphasizing here that the Renaissance began in the fourteenth, not in the fifteenth century, as one sees stated altogether too often. The essential feature of the Renaissance movement was the eager search for classical manuscripts. Hence the great importance of Sabbadini's work, especially his two volumes of Discoveries of Latin and Greek MSS in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, the second of which appeared after the publication of Mr. Hall's